



Working at height guidance



Coventry City Council

www.coventry.gov.uk

Introduction

Working at height remains one of the biggest causes of fatalities and major injuries. Work at height means work in any place where, if precautions were not taken, a person could fall a distance liable to cause personal injury. You are working at height if you:

- Work above ground/floor level
- Could fall from an edge, through an opening or fragile surface or
- Could fall from ground level into an opening in the floor or a hole in the ground
- Are working below ground level, but using access equipment to above floor level

Work at height does not include a slip or a trip on the level, as a fall from height has to involve a fall from one level to a lower level, nor does it include walking up and down a permanent staircase in a building.

Work at height must be properly planned, supervised and carried out by competent people with the skills, knowledge and experience to do the job. You must use the right type of equipment for working at height. Take a sensible approach when considering precautions. Low-risk, relatively straightforward tasks will require less effort when it comes to planning and there may be some low-risk situations where common sense tells you no particular precautions are necessary.

Significant risks

- Fatality
- Serious injury
- Injury from falling objects

Management responsibilities

- Avoid work at height wherever it is practical and sensible to do so by the use of other methods. For example using an extension pole to clean windows rather than getting up a ladder
- Assess the risks where working at height is necessary. Factors to weigh up include the height of the task, duration and frequency of the task, and environmental conditions such as the condition of the ground, and the weather
- Where you cannot avoid working at height, consider how you will prevent falls either using existing features such as a suitable barrier, or by selecting the correct type of equipment. Examples are permanent or temporary guardrails, scissor lifts and tower scaffolds
- Where the risk of a fall cannot be eliminated, you must consider how you can minimise the distance and consequences of a fall, again, by selecting the correct equipment. An example is putting on a safety harness correctly and connecting it, with an energy-absorbing lanyard, to a suitable anchor point. Another example would be by using a properly set up stepladder or ladder within its limitations for low level, short duration work only
- Ensure that anyone working at height is physically able to work safely, and is not under the influence of drugs, alcohol, or taking prescribed or other medication which would affect their ability to work safely at height

For each of the steps you should consider controls that protect everyone at risk before you consider controls that only protect individuals.

If working at height cannot be avoided, it must

- Be kept to a minimum
- Be properly planned
- Be appropriately supervised
- Be carried out by someone who is trained, competent and able to complete the task safely
- Not carried out in unsuitable weather conditions (e.g. wind, rain or ice!)

If employees are still being trained they should be supervised by a fully trained and competent person when working at height.

Employee responsibilities

Comply with any risk assessments and safe systems of work relating to working at height including (but not limited to):

- Doing as much work as possible from the ground
- Ensuring you can get safely to and from where you work at height
- Ensuring equipment is suitable, stable and strong enough for the job, and that it is maintained and checked regularly
- Being aware of additional precautions when working on or near fragile surfaces
- Protecting those working lower down and on the ground from falling objects
- Being aware of any emergency evacuation and rescue procedures
- Informing your manager or supervisor if you are taking any medication or have a health condition which would affect your ability to safely work at height

Training

Please contact Workforce Development for training on working at height

Legislation

The Work at Height Regulations 2005

Further information and guidance

Access Equipment Guidance

http://beacon.coventry.gov.uk/downloads/download/435/access_equipment

Council Forms and Templates

Quantitative risk assessment template

http://beacon.coventry.gov.uk/download/downloads/id/295/quantitative_high_risk_assessment

HSE Guidance

HSE work at height main page:

<http://www.hse.gov.uk/work-at-height/index.htm>

HSE working at height access and information toolkit

<http://www.hse.gov.uk/work-at-height/wait/index.htm>

HSE guidance on working at height:

<http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg401.pdf>

HSE guidance on working on roofs:

<http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg284.pdf>

Contacts

Health and Safety Services on 024 7683 3172 / 3117 or

e-mail healthandsafetyservicesadmin@coventry.gov.uk

Occupational Health on 024 7683 3255

If you need this information in another language or format please contact Occupational Health on 024 7683 3255